

Pentagon Has Vast File On Americans

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By John Hall
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The Defense Department said yesterday it has index cards in its files on 25 million "personalities."

The department said the computerized cards contain pertinent information on people, such as their name, sex and place of birth, as well as reference to a dossier containing more information.

The Army alone keeps at Ft. Holabird, Md., 7,138,181 personality dossiers on aliens, present and former employees of industrial security contractors, persons "considered to constitute a threat to security and defense" and past and present military personnel.

Assistant Defense Secretary Robert J. Froehlke disclosed the figures in testimony before the Senate Constitutional Rights Subcommittee.

He acknowledged that files were kept on well-known political figures such as Sen. Adlai Stevenson III (D-Ill.), but said steps were being taken to limit the practice and place it under civilian control.

Froehlke said the Defense Central Index of Investigation, established in 1965, serves as the central index for counter-intelligence and criminal investigative files of the Defense Department.

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"The DCII Contains about 25 million index cards on personalities and 760,000 cards on organizations and incidents," he said. "On an average day, 12,000 requests are processed and 20,000 additions, deletions and changes are made."

The index has grown at a rate of 2,500,000 annually but is expected to level off this year," he said.

Froehlke also gave details of the Stevenson filing.

"There was file bearing the name of Sen. Adlai Stevenson III in the field office of the Army's investigative and counter-intelligence unit in Chicago and that file consisted wholly or primarily of newspaper clippings."

He said there were "undoubtedly files prepared containing material relating to a large number of well-known public figures."

Froehlke also told the Senate subcommittee that the files had been destroyed.

The Defense Department issued a new directive effective Monday prohibiting "physical or electronic surveillance of federal, state or local officials, or of candidates for such offices," Froehlke said.

He said the new directive would prohibit use of covert surveillance of persons or organizations without specific authorization of the Defense Secretary or his designee.

Froehlke nonetheless said military surveillance activities, aimed at coping with civil

violence that might require Army troops to suppress, would be continued.

The implication was that military intelligence would not refrain from watching civilians in such instances if they felt it necessary.

To protect persons and property in an area of civil disturbance with the greatest effectiveness, "military commanders must know all that can be learned about that area and its inhabitants," Froehlke said.

He said military snooping on a broad scale was necessary during the late 1960s "because civilian agencies — federal, state and local — had demonstrated a lack of capability to provide the quantity and types of information believed

to be necessary effectively to cope in a timely fashion with the emergency then prevailing.

Froehlke appeared in the wake of testimony last week by several former undercover men for the Army that agents infiltrated, photographed and followed thousands of civilians, storing the information in dossiers and computerized files.

Panel Chairman Sam Irvin (D-N.C.) has charged that such practice is a gross violation of constitutional provisions for unfettered free speech and petition of grievances without recrimination.

Froehlke acknowledged that Army agents were assigned to the Republican and Democratic national conventions in 1968 but denied that any of them were assigned to attend sessions of the conventions in Miami and Chicago.

The subcommittee has heard testimony about an elaborate military snooping network that collected information on radicals as well as political leaders such as Stevenson, black leaders, newspapermen and antiwar groups.

The surveillance activities were begun in the violence-marred 1960s to prepare military units in case they were called out to suppress an insurrection. But Ervin and other civil libertarians contended the spying grew out of bounds, jeopardizing constitutional guarantees of free speech without fear of government retaliation.

Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird already has announced that domestic military intelligence activities would be placed under stricter controls.

A Defense "task force" was formed to undertake reforms. But one former undercover man, Edward D. Sohler, who served on the task force last year, said its main function was "lying" to congressmen, newsmen and others who inquired about intelligence activities.

Sohler said that while computerized files on domestic intelligence activities have been stopped, other types of dossiers are still being kept, and while original copies of a controversial compendium on American political activists has been destroyed, photographic copies of the list still exist.



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Under Secretary Robert Froehlke testifies before Senate subcommittee about the Pentagon's files on civilians.



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